Melicytus chathamicus

COMMON NAMES
Inihina, hakina, hinahina, Chatham Island mahoe

SYNONYMS
Hymenanthera latifolia var. chathamica F.Muell., Hymenanthera chathamica (F.Muell.) Kirk

FAMILY
Violaceae

AUTHORITY
Melicytus chathamicus (F.Muell.) Garn.-Jones

FLORA CATEGORY
Vascular – Native

ENDEMIC TAXON
Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS
No

ENDEMIC FAMILY
No

STRUCTURAL CLASS
Trees & Shrubs - Dicotyledons

NVS CODE
MELCHA

CHROMOSOME NUMBER
2n = 32

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS
2017 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES
2012 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE, RR
2009 | At Risk – Naturally Uncommon | Qualifiers: IE
2004 | Range Restricted

Cultivated (October). Photographer: John Smith-Dodsworth, Licence: CC BY-NC.

Melicytus chathamicus. Photographer: Peter J. de Lange, Licence: CC BY-NC.

SIMPLIFIED DESCRIPTION
Small tree bearing oval toothed leaves which have the veins much more visible on the underside inhabiting the Chatham Islands. Leaves 5-13cm long by 2-5cm wide, teeth or margin more obvious towards the tip. Flowers small. Fruit small, white flecked purple or entirely dark purple.

DISTRIBUTION
Endemic to the Chatham Islands: Rekohu (Chatham), Rangihaute (Pitt), Wharekaikite (Rabbit), Mang'ere, Tapuaenuku, and Hokorereoro (South East) Islands. Recorded growing in the wild in the Awarua Ecological District in Southland, presumably from garden escapes.

HABITAT
Widespread common tree of coastal forest. Also prominent on limestone outcrops around Te Whanga. Also common on coastal scrub on some of the smaller islands of the Chatham group. *Melicytus chathamicus* appears to prefer fertile soils it is scarce on the deeper forest peat soils of the southern tablelands.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

UPL: Obligate Upland
Rarely is a hydrophyte, almost always in uplands (non-wetlands).

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Dioecious, erect, densely branched, virgate, evergreen shrub to tree up to 10 m. tall; bark smooth, grey-green, often mottled and bearing lichen growth (*Bacidia*, graphid lichens especially). Branchlets 2.0–3.0 mm diameter, terete, green to green-brown, glabrescent, lenticelate, lenticels sparse. Adult leaves coriaceous, alternate glabrous; petiole 10-25 mm, plano-convex, glabrous, green or green-tinged pink or red; lamina (30-)50-120 × 20-60 mm, narrow- to broad-lanceolate, oblanceolate or oval, rarely obovate, dull to slightly glossy, green, olive-green or yellow-green, adaxially darker than abaxially, margins serrated, usually in distal half of leaf, teeth (3–)6–7–10 per margin, sometimes entire; apex, acute, subacute or obtuse; base attenuate or cuneate. Stipules 1.5–2.3 × 0.8–1.3 m, narrowly deltoid, caducous, dark green, often pink-tinged or completely red. Inflorescences (2–)4-flowered fascicles, arising from branchlets. Male flowers: pedicels 3.8–6.2 mm long, slender, decurved, glabrous. Sepals 5, unequal, imbricate, 1.8–2.6 × 1.8–2.4 mm, broadly triangular, margins ciliate, purple, apices subacute to obtuse. Corolla broadly cylindric to subcampanulate, 4.2–5.1 × 3.2–3.6 mm. Petals 5, 4.4–5.4 × 2.4–2.6 mm, oblong, distal quarter reflexed, colour variable ranging from pale yellow tinged apricot, apricot, pink or rose, margins entire, glabrous. Anthers sessile, oblong, 1.0–1.2 mm long, yellow, connate to form an urceolate tube, appendage membranous, dark yellow to orange, triangular, apex fimbriate, exceeding anthers. Gynoecium vestigial. Female flowers: pedicels 3.6–5.8 mm long, slender, decurved, glabrous. Sepals 5, unequal, imbricate, 1.6–2.4 × 1.6–2.2 mm, triangular, margins ciliate, green or purple with membranous margins, apices subacute to obtuse. Corolla broadly cylindric to subcampanulate, 4.2–5.1 × 3.2–3.6 mm. Petals 5, 4.4–5.4 × 2.4–2.6 mm, oblong, distal quarter reflexed, colour variable ranging from pale yellow tinged apricot, apricot, pink or rose, margins entire, glabrous. Anthers 0.6–0.7 mm long, vestigial, sterile; appendage membranous, orange to tan, narrowly triangular, apex fimbriate, exceeding anthers. Ovary 1.4–1.8 mm long, glabrous, broadly ovoid, greenish-white, cream or pale yellow. Style 0.3–0.4 mm long, glabrous, persistent in fruit; stigmas 2, 0.4–0.6 mm long, flat, spreading, cream or pale yellow, withering and falling. Fruit 16–18 × 14–16 mm, ovoid, globose berry, initially green, maturing white, white mottled purple, or white flushed purple; calyx persistent; mesocarp 0.8–1.3 mm thick, fleshy, white. Pyrenes 2, 4.0–5.0 × 4.0–5.2 mm, broadly ovoid to circular, with a flattened surface plane or with 2–3-faces and ridges inbetween, testa dark purple-brown, black-brown, brown or orange, surfaces distinctly tuberculate, indistinctly ridged or tuberculate.

SIMILAR TAXA

Melicytus chathamicus is a singular species which could not be confused with any other indigenous Chatham Islands plant. The thick, olive-green, leathery toothed lanceolate to oval leaves, flowers which emerge in bunches from the branchlets, and profusion of globose, white, white-flecked purple or white tinged purple berries serve to immediately distinguish it.

FLOWERING

Spring.

FRUITING

September - April

THREATS

Widespread and common in forested habitats secure from browsing animals.

ETYMOLOGY

melicytus: From the Greek meli (honey) and kytos (hollow container), referring to the staminal nectaries of the flowers. Literally “honey-cave”
chathamicus: From the Chathams

CULTIVATION

Occasionally available from specialist native plant nurseries.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact sheet prepared by P.J. de Lange for NZPCN (26 April 2022). Description by P.J. de Lange (26 April 2022).

NZPCN FACT SHEET CITATION

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MORE INFORMATION

https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/melicytus-chathamicus/

PDF DATE

17 September 2024